

REMARKS

Claims 6 and 8-12 remain in the application, with Claims 1-5 and 7 having been cancelled and Claims 8-12 having been added. No new matter has been added. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1-4 and 7 are canceled without prejudice. Thus, the rejection of claims 1-4 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) is rendered moot.

Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over US 6,241,747 (Ruff), and further in view of US 3,221,746 (Noble). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 6 recites a surgical thread for cosmetic operations including "protrusions [that] are provided in a form of needles with sockets for fixation thereof on the thread." By using sockets to affix protrusions to the thread, the present invention allows use of a thread to meet the delicate requirements of cosmetic surgery while avoiding having to cut or notch the thread, thereby preserving rupture strength of the thread.

Ruff discloses a tissue connector with a body having a sharp tissue penetrating tip and barbs formed integrally along the length of the body. The tissue connector of Ruff is not a thread (as evidenced by the presence of a sharp tissue penetrating tip), and, as recognized by the examiner, Ruff does not disclose a separate mechanism for attaching the barbs to the body of the connector. The examiner has cited In re Dulberg, 129 USPQ 348 (CCPA 1961) for the proposition that "constructing a formerly integral structure in various elements involved only routine skill in the art." However, here, Applicants are introducing new elements (i.e. sockets) that were not "formerly" part of an "integral structure." Furthermore, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have been motivated by the teaching of Noble to modify the connector of Ruff to include sockets on a thread as recited in Claim 6.

Noble discloses a tubular coupling for connecting the ends of tubular organs, such as blood vessels, within the body. The coupling includes a rigid tubular body 1 with annular

grooves 5 formed about the exterior of the body (*See* Fig. 1). Ring members 4 bearing a plurality of barbs of sharpened portions 6 are located in the grooves (*See* Fig. 1).

Neither Ruff nor Noble disclose a thread with protrusions suitable for cosmetic surgery, much less sockets to affix protrusions to such a thread. Therefore, a combination of Ruff and Noble would not result in a surgical thread as recited in Claim 6.

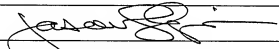
Noble, rather than teaching sockets on a thread, teaches incorporation of a groove in a tubular coupling to accommodate a ring member. Applying the teachings of Noble to the connector of Ruff would result in a connector body having a series of annular recesses formed along its length, which is contrary to the main idea of the present invention, namely to provide protrusions on a surgical thread with a minimal but uniform cross-section while preserving maximal axial integrity and maintaining rupture strength of the thread. *See* page 4, paragraph 4 of Applicants' specification. Forming annular recesses in a thread would render it unsuitable for cosmetic surgery.

Accordingly, Claim 6 is allowable over Ruff, alone or in view of Noble. Claims 8-12 depend from Claim 6 and are therefore allowable for the reasons outlined above as well as for the additional limitations they recite. For example, Claim 12 recites a thread length sufficient "to extend from a temporal portion of a face to a nasolabial fold of the face so as to lift a flabby droopy region of soft tissues of the face when inserted," and neither Ruff nor Noble teach or suggest such a feature.

CONCLUSION

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections, and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,					
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